# Monitoring and Evaluating Engagement

**10**

GUIDEBOOK SECTION

Youth Engagement in Health Research

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**WELLBEING HEALTH & YOUTH**
NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Adolescent Health

**YOUNG & RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE**

# Overview \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

## Monitoring and evaluating young people's engagement

Evaluation is the systematic process of assessing what you do and how you do it to assess the 'worth, merit or value' of something (Mertens & Wilson, 2013; Scriven, 2003–04). In research it involves planned steps to assess the value of the way you do research to better understand whether the approach you have used has been effectively implemented and how this has shaped the research.

Monitoring and evaluating young people's engagement in health research is an underdeveloped area of knowledge and practice. This encompasses more than just monitoring and evaluating young people's experiences. It iinvolves understanding what adults, researchers and institutions are doing differently to create an enabling environment for young people to meaningfully engage. Identifying and reflecting on the barriers or enablers which shape the youth engagement journey in your research is vital. More research, documentation of good/current practice, creating and sharing M&E guidelines and tools, and piloting of different evaluation approaches is needed to grow the field of youth-engaged research .

At a **minimum** it is important to be clear about why and how you will use a participatory approach in your project. You can plan and implement opportunities for young people and senior researchers/adults involved to provide feedback on their experience of engagement throughout your research project. There are plenty of simple ways to gather feedback continuously and at all stages in the research process. This can enhance the overall quality of the youth engagement experience and provide you with vital information on what's working well and areas for improvement. If you are strapped for time or resources and unable to conduct a thorough evaluation of youth engagement in your research, then we suggest you do spot-checks to gather feedback from young people and researchers/adults involved in the process.

In a **best practice scenario**, you would develop an evaluation framework at the start of your research project which measures both the outcomes for young people and researchers/adults as a result of their partnership and collaboration.

> Involving young people in developing the evaluation framework and logic for measuring outcomes at the agenda-setting phase of your research is a great opportunity for co-design and methods of collecting feedback/data which are most engaging and relevant to young people.
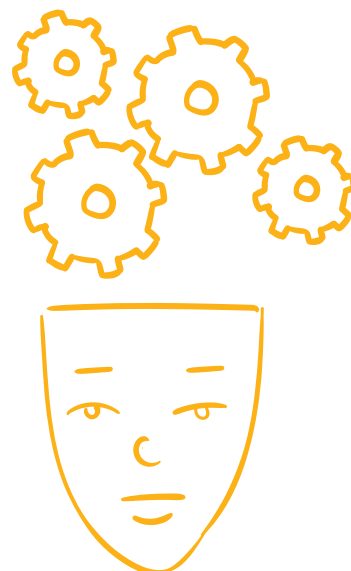
## Note: consider how you are gathering feedback on expected and unexpected outcomes.

Project/program logic determined at the start of your research project may exclude some actual outcomes not predicted at the start. Qualitative evaluation methodologies such as Most Significant Change can capture both expected and unexpected outcomes.

### Evaluation Framework Resources

If you are able to develop a comprehensive evaluation framework, below are some resources to help you get started:

- How to develop a program logic for planning and evaluation | Australian Institute of Family Studies (aifs.gov.au)

- Progressing research impact assessment: A 'contributions' approach | Research Evaluation | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

- Youth Engagement Evaluation Framework, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

- Toolkit: Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation, Save the Children

- The 'Most Significant Change' Technique: A Guide to Its Use, Rick Davies & Jessica Dart

- Orygen, Program evaluation: Laying the right foundations

- NSW Ministry of Health, Developing and Using Program Logic: A Guide

- YERP, Youth Affairs Council Victoria

- Better Evaluation

# Prepare \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

## Creating a framework for monitoring & evaluation

Setting clear objectives, outcomes, indicators and/or domains of change you want to measure across the engagement process as early as possible is important. Young people should be involved with you and your team to identify what these should be, and what evidence would indicate that the project has met these objectives.

VicHealth has developed a comprehensive youth engagement evaluation framework which you may want to review and adapt for your research project. This framework includes five values which underpin youth engagement, which are then linked to principles, practices and indicators that can be measured. These values are:

1. Youth engagement leads to positive change and development

2. Youth engagement is accessible and inclusive

3. Youth engagement is respectful and equitable

4. Youth engagement is appropriately resourced

5. Youth engagement supports transparency and accountability

This same review identified some common outcomes from quality youth engagement in health settings, which you may want to consider including in your own monitoring and evaluation framework.

For the full framework and detailed breakdown of principles, practices, indicators and implementation guidance read more here.

We have also developed a simple program logic tool which you can use as a starting point for monitoring and evaluating the engagement process.

### Template

⭕ Tool: Monitoring and Evaluating Youth Engagement using a Theory of Change

Remember that monitoring and evaluation of youth engagement is as much about what adults, teams and organisations are doing as it is about what young people do and don't experience. Consider when and how data needs to be collected from adults and the role that young people can play as monitors and evaluators of these processes.

# Connect \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

Monitoring and evaluating youth engagement throughout your research doesn't have to be too complex. At a minimum, generating feedback loops to monitor young people's and researchers'/adults' experience of the process and identify areas for improvement together can enhance the process and lead to deeper engagement for all stakeholders and better outcomes for the research project. This is also a useful mechanism for communication: to check in on expectations, to identify additional support required or respond to any issues which may arise throughout the process.

## Building in monitoring & evaluation

Suggestions for building in monitoring & evaluation into your engagement process:

| Stage of engagement | Suggested methods |
|---|---|
| Identifying young people and researcher's goals/expectations at the start of engagement | ○ 1:1 conversation/semi-structured interviews<br>○ Group discussion or workshop |
| Gathering rapid feedback on the experience throughout the process | ○ Quick one question polls<br>○ Online/paper surveys<br>○ Retrospective meetings |
| Gathering feedback on young people and researchers/adults overall experience at the end of the process/project | ○ Structured interviews<br>○ Exit surveys<br>○ Group interviews<br>○ Group focus groups |
| Long-term evaluation | ○ Most Significant Change evaluation methodology<br>○ Pre and post surveys<br>○ Graphic methods such as pre-post and follow up storyboards<br>○ Follow-up surveys or interviews |

It is best practice to share the findings of evaluations with the young people involved so that they can contribute further insights into the overall assessment, prior to finalization.

### Further resources
○ Template: Feedback Form

# Reflect \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

It is important to consider how you can individually and collectively reflect on the impact of your research project. We have developed a simple impact log which you can use or adapt.

The aim of a reflective impact log is for people working in research or knowledge exchange projects to capture evidence and develop their thinking about the project's impact on an ongoing basis.

## Further resources

⊙ Tool: Reflective Impact Log

## Applying the WH&Y framework: reflection questions

### Mutual trust & accountability

Will you involve young people in co-designing an evaluation framework, identifying outcomes of engagement, or identifying the best methods of collecting feedback?

How will you collect feedback from young people on their experience of engaging in your research in an anonymous or confidential way?

Will you include some monitoring and evaluation methods which allow for exchange and dialogue between young people and researchers to explore outcomes together?

### Equity & responsiveness

Have you factored in an adequate budget to remunerate young people? As adults, how will you respond to feedback provided by young people?

How will you communicate what has happened with their feedback on youth engagement and outcomes?

### Diversity & inclusion

How will the methods you use to collect feedback be accessible for the diverse young people you have engaged?

How will you make it easy and meaningful for young people to participate in any monitoring and evaluation activities?

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# Footnotes

[1] Das, S., Daxenberger, L., Dieudonne, L., Eustace, J., Hanard, A., Krishnamurthi, A., Mishra, P., Njavika, S., Quigley, P., Vergou, A., and Wilson, O. (2020). An inquiry into involving young people in health research - Executive summary. London: Wellcome

[2] Davies, Rick. (2005). The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use". 10.13140/RG.2.1.4305.3606.

[3] Aston, R., & Tse, J. (2022). Youth Engagement Evaluation Framework: Prepared for The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. Centre for Program Evaluation, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne

[4] Ibid